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SENSITIVE

SIPDIS

BANGKOK FOR REO HHOWARD AND RDMA WBOWMAN

STATE FOR EAP/MLS EMERY

STATE ALSO FOR OES/EGC DREW NELSON, RACHEL KASTENBERG, KATE LARSEN

STATE PASS TO USAID FOR ANE, G/ENV, EGAT/ESP

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SUBJECT: Philippines Copenhagen Reaction: Government Negotiators  
Divided, NGOs Seethe, Press Constructive

Ref: A) State 3080 B) Manila 142 C) 09 Manila 2483

1. (SBU) Summary: President Arroyo and her chief climate envoy Heherson Alvarez have expressed strong support for the Copenhagen Accord and the United Nations (U.N.) negotiating process. President Arroyo moderated the Philippines' pre-Copenhagen climate change position by telling the delegation not to let the Philippines' insistence on "deep and early cuts" in greenhouse gas emissions for developed countries stand in the way of an agreement. Alvarez was optimistic about the Accord and the United Nations (U.N.) negotiating process and said GRP attempts to influence a common ASEAN position had yielded mixed results. Working-level Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) negotiators were deeply disappointed with the way the Copenhagen talks were run and the Accord's lack of binding commitments by developed countries to cut emissions. Philippine non-governmental organizations (NGOs) faulted both the Danish hosts' poor planning and conduct of the meeting as well as U.S. "inflexibility" with respect to G-77 positions for what they describe as a failed conference. The Philippine mainstream media have presented a reasonably balanced view of the Copenhagen talks and its consequences. End Summary.

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President, Top Climate Envoy Support Accord, U.N. Forum  
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2. (SBU) As reported reftel B, the Philippines' lead climate change negotiator, former Senator and Environmental Secretary Heherson "Sonny" Alvarez told Economic Counselor and EST&Hoff on January 19 that he planned to associate the Philippines with the Copenhagen Accord by the January 31 deadline. During the demarche meeting Alvarez described his and President Arroyo's views on the Accord, reiterated his support for the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) process, and provided an update on Philippine efforts to inform a common ASEAN position on climate change. Alvarez said that although he was disappointed that the Copenhagen talks had "diminished" the Kyoto Protocol, he was generally optimistic about the Accord and the United Nations (U.N.) negotiating process. He expressed support for the agreed-upon transparency requirements, noting that "without verification the Accord is a punctured balloon." He maintained that although the Copenhagen talks were arduous, the U.N. remained the proper forum for climate change negotiations, because it was important to include as much of the world community as possible. Although the Philippines was a "shy delegation," not a leader, at the talks, Alvarez said GRP attempts to influence a common ASEAN position had yielded mixed results, noting that he had instilled a greater sense of "climate change urgency" in talks with Thailand's Prime Minister (PM), but that Singapore remained non-committal.

3. (SBU) President Arroyo moderated the Philippines' pre-Copenhagen climate change position by telling the delegation not to let the Philippines' insistence on "deep and early cuts" in greenhouse-gas emissions for developed countries stand in the way of an agreement, according to Alvarez. He noted that he had publicly endorsed the Accord during the final hours of the Copenhagen meeting, while

President Arroyo described the results as "a step forward in the right direction" during media interviews upon her return from the climate summit.

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Working Level Dismayed with Small Group Talks  
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14. (SBU) Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) officials who had participated in the negotiations were much less sanguine about both the process and the outcome of the talks. Director of the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) Office of the United Nations and International Organizations Leila Santos told EST&Hoff that the Danish chair, former Minister for Climate and Energy Connie Hedegaard, "directly and deliberately misinformed" her and other working group negotiators by repeatedly denying that small-group meetings were taking place outside the plenary forum, even after their existence "was all over CNN." She faulted the Danish Presidency more than the UNFCCC process, however, saying she and her DFA colleagues were willing to give the upcoming COP-16 in Mexico City "another shot." Santos said the "only positive" of the Accord was the extension of the mandates of the two working groups. She was disappointed that the United States did not commit to deeper cuts in emissions and noted that the Philippines remained "bound to the G-77." As of January 26, the DFA was still consulting internationally with the G-77 and internally with the Departments of Energy and Agriculture with respect to the Philippines association with the Accord, according to Santos.

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President Trims - Some Say Purges - GRP Climate Delegation  
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15. (SBU) NGOs have made up a significant portion of the GRP's climate change delegations since the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de

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Janeiro (Ref C). The Copenhagen-bound team, however, was both half the size of and 'NGO-light' relative to earlier delegations. Several experienced Filipino negotiators known for their hard-line G-77 views were cut from Alvarez's delegation, as were all representatives from Filipino NGOs, leaving only members of three international NGOs (the World Wildlife Fund, Oxfam, and Conservation International) on the roster. (Note: Several of the more strident G-77 countries recruited the Philippines' castoffs, with Sudan taking Bernaditas Muller, and Vicente Paolo Yu negotiating for Bolivia. End Note.) While Alvarez told us the executive office cut the delegation for budgetary reasons, representatives of local NGOs were convinced President Arroyo was behind the changes.

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Climate Coalition Faults Danes, Sudanese, and U.S. for "Depressing Outcome"  
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16. (SBU) Danish procedural ineptitude, U.S. inflexibility to G-77 demands, and Sudanese intransigence made for a "depressing outcome" at Copenhagen, according to Ronaldo Gutierrez, who attended the COP-15 as an observer for the Philippine Network on Climate Change (PNCC). (Note: Observers credit the PNCC, a consortium of 10 Philippine environmental NGOs, with shaping the GRP's pre-Copenhagen climate change position. End Note.) The poor procedural skills of Danish PM Lars Lokke Rasmussen, the Conference Chair, slowed the negotiations and needlessly offended G-77 delegates, Gutierrez said. He also claimed that U.S. negotiators rejected virtually all G-77 proposals, thus setting the stage for U.S. "brinksmanship" that led to the Accord. While he faulted Sudan for intransigence, Gutierrez also noted that Sudan's likening of the climate deal to a "holocaust" discredited its opponents and spurred many G-77 countries to vote in favor of taking note of the Accord.

17. (SBU) Maria de la Paz and Blas Tabaranza, who attended as observers for Haribon, a prominent, mainstream Philippines environmental NGO, complained of Copenhagen's failed logistics, describing kilometer-long lines outside the Bella convention center and registration procedures that took six hours or more. On a substantive note, they also faulted the U.S. delegation for the blanket rejection of G-77 proposals, and described the Copenhagen Accord as "worse than no agreement at all." La Paz and Tabaranza consider the Accord's burden sharing (between developed and developing countries) provisions a renunciation of the Kyoto

Protocol's principle of "common but differentiated responsibilities," and described the USD 30 billion fast track fund as "token and paltry."

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Balanced Press Coverage Plays Down Blame Game  
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18. (SBU) In contrast to the heated rhetoric of the environmental NGOs, the mainstream Philippine press presented a much broader perspective of the Copenhagen summit. Although press reports universally described the talks as failed, few attributed that failure solely to the developed countries and instead offered diverse analyses and ways forward. For example, feature articles in major dailies titled "Better Than Nothing" and "There's Still Mexico" proposed individual activism (one article suggested planting trees in lieu of birthday gifts), continued engagement with the United States and China, and more consistent domestic energy policies as post-Copenhagen strategies. While coverage of the Copenhagen talks has dwindled in recent weeks, the prominence of climate change as an election issue promises to increase visibility of the topic in coming months, according to media analysts.

19. (SBU) Comment. We will continue engaging our interlocutors in the government to urge expeditious association with the Accord and report any substantial developments. End Comment.

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